

Sermon for Easter Sunday

Date: April 12, 2020

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Opening Gospel: Mark 16:1–8

Old Testament: Job 19:23–27

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:51–57

Gospel Reading: John 20:1–18



Sermon Title: Angel Eyes

Hymns:

- LSB 457 – Jesus Christ Is Risen Today
- LSB 903 – This Is the Day the Lord Has Made
- LSB 478 – The Day of Resurrection
- LSB 461 – I Know That My Redeemer Lives
- LSB 466 – Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia
- LSB 805 – Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow
- LSB 822 – Alleluia! Let Praises Ring
- LSB 477 – Alleluia, Alleluia! Hearts to Heaven

Distribution:

- LSB 631 – Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face to Face
- LSB 633 – At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Creative Worship



Pastor James Groleau
St. John's Lutheran Church
1200 13th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912
Office: (507) 433-2642
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org
FaceBook.com/StJohnsAustin
Twitter.com@StJohnsAustinMN
FaceBook.com/Shepherd.James.Groleau
KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



Text:

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Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!
Amen.

The phrase “angel eyes” will conjure up different ideas based on your age and interests, but for now, push all those other kinds of angel eyes out of your mind. Today I want you to focus on only one set of angel eyes, and through those eyes see the greatest sight this world has ever seen. I’m talking about the eyes of the Easter angel in the empty tomb of Jesus.

It’s funny that we call it the “empty tomb,” since St. Mark’s account tells us the tomb was actually a bit overcrowded on that first Easter Sunday. The two Marys and Salome were shocked to discover the large stone rolled away from the tomb, and they went inside to investigate.

They were startled to find not a dead Jesus inside but a young man dressed in white, an angel of the Lord. Their alarm was most likely twofold: first, they were distressed that no Jesus was to be found, and second, angels of the Lord are scary! Despite what you see in figurines and pictures, God’s angels usually appear as majestic creatures who strike fear into the hearts of onlookers. That’s why the first words out of the mouths of angels are almost always “Do not be afraid!”

On Easter morning, this is exactly what happens. The angel says to the terrified women, “Do not be alarmed. ¹” They don’t need to fear this angel, since he has come in peace to be the bearer of Good News. He announces that they don’t need to fear what happened to the body of Jesus, because He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The angel continues,

You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He has risen; He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you.²

The angel calls the women to see with their own eyes that Jesus is in fact not there, and then he explains what his own eyes have witnessed. He knows they are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, “who was crucified.”

The women had gazed upon Jesus suffering for the sin of the whole world under His Father’s wrath on the cross, and they had looked on as Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus, but that’s all they had seen. The angel, however, has seen the resurrected Jesus with his own eyes.

1 Mark 16:6

2 Mark 16: 6–7

Later that afternoon, Jesus would appear to ten of His apostles and prove His identity by showing them the nail and spear scars on His hands and side. The next Sunday, Jesus invites doubting Thomas to touch those scars, which turns him into believing Thomas as he cries out, “My Lord and my God!”³

Still later, St. Paul would encounter the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus and then write to the Corinthians:

I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.⁴

You might be thinking, on Easter Sunday, why are we still so focused on the crucifixion? That is because the cross must always be the center of our theology, the focal point of life.

A Jesus who has not been crucified on your behalf would do you no good.⁵ Look through the angel’s eyes and see that Jesus is the Crucified One. He was put to death for your sins. The cross is our life!

St. Paul wrote:

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.⁶

and

Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.⁷

Of course, the resurrection is essential too. You also need to see through, the angel’s eyes, that Jesus was raised on Easter for you. Good Friday and Easter are like two sides of the same coin. You can’t buy anything with a one-sided quarter. Jesus couldn’t pay for your salvation only by dying or only by living. He needed to do both.

He had to fulfill God’s Law on your behalf and suffer for your sins. He had to fight Satan, whom you cannot defeat, and die for all the times you have fallen for the devil’s temptations. He had to go into the grave and deposit all of your sins

3 John 20:28

4 1 Corinthians 2:2

5 1 Corinthians 15:14

6 Galatians 2:20

7 Galatians 2:6:14

there, but He had to come out alive to grant you forgiveness of sins and His own righteousness.

After His resurrection, Jesus continues the pattern established on that first Easter by hiding Himself from the sight of His disciples, and by using angels to proclaim His death and resurrection. You, like the women at the tomb, cannot see Jesus with your own eyes, yet the reliable testimony of the Easter angel, recorded in Sacred Scripture, is the precious Gospel that you should keep before your eyes at all times.

Though Jesus remains hidden from our physical sight, He has continued to send us His message of saving grace. After His resurrection, Jesus sent His apostles out to be His messengers, to preach the Gospel to the whole world. Those apostles appointed pastors and teachers everywhere they went to continue sharing the Good News of Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

There was nothing particularly angelic about the Apostles, nor about Christian pastors like me. We are a pretty sorry lot in general. Nobody would look at me and say, "He's got angel eyes." Still what the Apostles and we pastors of Christ do have are the Bible's beautiful feet. According to the prophet Isaiah and the apostle St. Paul who declared:

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!⁸

Today receive this word of Christ through the messenger He has called to preach to you. I proclaim to you this day for the sake of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Baptized into His death and resurrection, you are now clothed with His righteousness, which grants eternal salvation.

Recognize that Jesus comes today in these words . He comes to feed His followers. We don't see Jesus with us, but through His messengers He announces that He has promised to be here, so we see Him through the eyes of faith.

On Easter, the angel told the women where they could find Jesus. Today I have the same message: Jesus has promised that you may find Him in His Word and Sacraments. May your eyes stay always stay fixed on Jesus, crucified for your sin and raised for your salvation.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!
Amen.

8 Romans 10:15



**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**